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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Human smugglers headed to jail

(Phoenix, Ariz. – June 22, 2004) Three men who pled guilty earlier this year to human smuggling are headed to jail for their crimes. The three men were recently sentenced in Maricopa County Superior Court for smuggling a person across the border and then holding the victim hostage while seeking payment from his family.

Malvin Omar Chirnos-Cruz (aka Victorico Sanchez-Barrios), Dennis Ivan Casere-Escobar and Marvin Omar Galeano-Acosta were each charged with one count of Illegally Conducting an Enterprise, Kidnapping and Threatening and Intimidating. The defendants held the victim hostage, and threatened to harm him. They relayed their threats to the victim's cousin and sought payment in order to release him safely. The investigation and arrests were the efforts of officers assigned to the U.S. Customs Task Force.

Defendants Casere-Escobar was sentenced to three-and-one-half years in prison, Chirnos-Cruz was sentenced to three years in prison and Galeano-Acosta was sentenced to 18 months supervised probation with a six month jail term. All three defendants were ordered to pay restitution to the victim. Assistant Attorney General Laura M. Reckart prosecuted this case.

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